

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

Applicant/Contact name and address: Zenith Colony Inc.
PO Box 1109
Cut Bank, MT 59427

1. *Type of action:* Application to Change Water Right No. 40F-30122926
2. *Water source name:* Groundwater
3. *Location affected by project:* of Section 14, Township 36N, Range 6W, Glacier County
4. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*

Water Right 40F 30024055 has historically had two wells in the NENESW Section 19, T36N, R5W, Glacier County. Applicant is proposing to add two points of diversion through Change Application 40F 30122926. They will be in the SESENW and NESWNE of Section 14, Township 36N, Range 6W, Glacier County. The new proposed diversions are wells drilled in the same source aquifer as the historical wells and will be manifold to the applicant's existing water delivery system. There will be no change to the place of use, purpose or place of storage.

The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

5. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment: (include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)*

Montana Department of Environmental Quality – Web site
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Web site
National Wetlands Inventory – Web site
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Web site
USDA Web Soil Survey – Web site

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

The Applicant showed in 40F 30024055 that the zone of influence of the well intersects the East Fork Big Rock Coulee. The reach of the East Fork Big Rock Coulee that is included in the zone of influence is not identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. This application does not include an increase in flow or volume. There will be no changes in the amount or timing of depletion, no additional depletion to surface water is expected.

Determination: No significant impact

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

East Fork Big Rock Coulee is not listed on the 2018 Montana 303(d) list. East Fork Big Rock Coulee is a tributary of Little Rock Coulee which is a tributary to Cut Bank Creek. The Judith River is listed on the 2016 Montana 303(d) list.

Determination: No significant impact

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

The wells were drilled in July 2017. Change Authorization 40F 30122926 does not include an increase in flow or volume. There will be no changes in the amount or timing of depletion, no additional depletion to surface water is expected. Based on these findings, there will be no significant impact to the groundwater aquifer or hydraulically connected surface waters.

Determination: No significant impact

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Water will be diverted from the ground via an 8 inch well and a 10 inch well. The 8 inch well was completed to a depth of 116 feet. The 10 inch well was completed to a depth of 140 feet. Both wells are manifold into an existing system that included two existing wells. All four wells are in the same source aquifer known as the Two Medicine Aquifer. Water will be piped through a 3-inch PVC transmission line buried at least 6.5 feet below the surface. The wells each use a Grundfos 25S30-15 pump. The beneficial use has already been established under Permit 40F 30024055. The system will have a chemigation check valve and inline totalizer flow meter located at place of use.

The two new wells were drilled and been pump tested by Aquasource Inc LLC. The diversion structure has been designed and will be constructed by Northland Engineering of Helena, Montana. Aquasource Inc LLC is a Montana licensed water well driller. These wells will have no channel impacts, will not create any significant flow modifications or barriers, or have any impact to riparian areas.

Determination: No significant impact

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program website, The Bureau of Land Management, (BLM), lists the Sprague's Pipit and Veery as Sensitive. There are no species that are endangered or have special status in the area. There are no plant species of special concern identified.

Determination: No significant impact

Wetlands - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

No known wetlands exist in the project area.

Determination: No significant impact

Ponds - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: Not applicable.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

No impacts identified. This water project is for adding two points of diversion to an existing appropriation in and will not influence soil quality, stability, or moisture content.

Determination: No significant impact

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

No vegetation was listed as endangered or threatened by the USFWS for the project area. The control of noxious weeds is the responsibility of the property owner.

Determination: No significant impact

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

There are no air quality concerns with this project.

Determination: No significant impact

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.

Determination: No significant impact

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: No additional impacts on other environmental resources were identified.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

Determination: NA- Project not located on State or Federal Lands.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No impact identified

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: This project will have no impact on human health.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes X No ___ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: There are no additional government regulatory impacts on private property rights associated with this application.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No Significant Impact
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No Significant Impact
- (c) Existing land uses? No Significant Impact
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No Significant Impact
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No Significant Impact
- (f) Demands for government services? No Significant Impact
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No Significant Impact
- (h) Utilities? No Significant Impact
- (i) Transportation? No Significant Impact
- (j) Safety? No Significant Impact
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No Significant Impact

2. Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:

Secondary Impacts: No impact identified

Cumulative Impacts: No impact identified

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** N/A

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider: An alternative analysis of the project identified a no action alternative to the change in place of use. This alternative would not have any direct impacts that are typically associated with irrigation. The no-action alternative would not allow the Applicant to meet the purpose of and need for the project.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative:*** Remove the second point of diversion and divert the entire flow from the original diversion.

2 ***Comments and Responses***

3. ***Finding:***

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: No significant impacts have been identified, therefore an EIS is not necessary.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Todd Netto

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: August 28, 2019